The Enchanted Secular: Buddhism and the Emergence of Transtraditional "Spirituality"

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IN THE LATE nineteenth century, when educated Asian Buddhists began debating with Christian missionaries and presenting their own articulations of the Dharma to the broader world, they began to adopt certain terms from the lexicons of Europe. One that entered Buddhist vocabulary and quickly became ubiquitous is a term much discussed in the study of religions today: spiritual (or its substantive, spirituality). How did this term begin to work its way into discussions of Buddhism? What "work" did this term do? Since it was not an indigenous Buddhist concept, why did Buddhists find it necessary to include it in their discussions of Buddhism? And did the use of this term reflect any changes and developments in Buddhist traditions themselves or was it merely a rhetorical device?

This is a larger set of questions than I can address fully in this short paper, but I want to offer some preliminary suggestions based on just a few examples. Given the current prominence of the term "spiritual" in popular culture across the globe, the scholarly attention it is receiving today, and its notorious vagueness, it may be helpful to see how it began to be used in accounts of Buddhism. This may in turn help us to understand some of the ways in which Buddhists were beginning to reconceive of their tradition in transnational, transtraditional categories that indicated important changes.

The "spiritual" as we often see it used today—that is, something indicating an experiential-cum-cosmic reality to which no religious tradition has exclusive claim—began to emerge in the nineteenth century and was quickly taken up by Buddhists.[1] The particular way some early Buddhist

[1] I would not go so far as to claim that "spirituality," as it comes to be used in post-1960s

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modernizers and revitalizers used the term was intimately tied to the secular as a social phenomenon, as well as secularism as a political ideology. The way these figures used the term re-articulated Buddhism in terms of secular disciplines, but in a way that reenchanted them. The concept of Buddhism as a spirituality also mirrored secularism as a political ideology in that it was intended to create a generic discursive space unbound by tradition.

THE RISE OF TRANSTRADITIONAL SPIRITUALITY

In order to understand something of how the term "spiritual" assumed a particular place and performed certain functions in early articulations of Buddhist modernism, it might be helpful to look at the new meanings the term had taken on in the West before Buddhist authors began to pick it up. I do not have the space to delve into this genealogy in any depth, but a few key points will serve our purposes. In his overview of the term, Walter Principe outlines pre-modern usages of "spiritual" in various phases of Christianity: the biblical use implying an opposition of spiritual (*pneuma*: life in the spirit of God, the moral life) with carnal (*sarx*); the Hellenistic and Gnostic polarization between the realm of the spiritual (*pneumatikos*) and material world (*hylé*); and a variety of theological meanings that arise in the medieval period, for example, the spiritual as eternal as opposed to temporal, property owned by the Church as opposed to the king, to various "higher" meanings in the Bible (the spiritual rather than temporal meaning of a passage); and, for example in Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, the interior movements of the soul in meditation, prayer, and moral reflection.[2]

Beginning in the seventeenth century, authors began to use the French term *spiritualité* to refer to a personal experience of the divine.[3] The Protestant Reformation, Enlightenment philosophies, German Idealism, and Romanticism, even when they disagreed with each other, all gradually shifted the locus of religious meaning more toward the personal, private realm. Historians of religion will recall discussions of Schleiermacher and the relocation of the essence of religion in personal experience.[4] His insistence that what was real and significant in religion was not rituals, creeds, and institutions but "feeling" was in part a response to emerging secular critiques of religion. German idealist philosophers began to use the term

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America and Europe emerges fully-formed here—just that we can see its roots in the late nineteenth century.

[2] Principe 1983.

[3] Carrette and King 2005, p. 38.

[4] Proudfoot 1985.

"the Absolute"—an initial foray into developing a language of religion that could be transferred across traditions and was not bound to the institutional structures and authority of religions. Thus we have two poles, the individual and cosmic both implicated in this emerging vocabulary that would come to include spirituality.

It was in the nineteenth century that spirituality surfaced as a unique designation referring to attitudes and practices oriented toward a transcendent reality to which all major religions might provide paths and which was accessed not through the institutions of religion but through personal experience. Nineteenth-century religious explorers shaped a new understanding of spirituality as the individual's experience of or search for the divine or ultimate reality. Here spirituality comes to be considered distinct from religion, especially "institutional religion." Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) is perhaps the patron saint of America's enthusiastic iteration of spirituality, but it is also embodied in other Transcendentalists, Quakers, Reform Jews, New Thought advocates, Theosophists, spiritualists, and Unitarians.[5] It is characterized by a cosmopolitan embrace of the many different faiths as each having a "spiritual dimension," again over and above institutional and social dimensions, and an emphasis on personal access to this reality through serene contemplation or ecstatic experience. Many came to consider this an autonomous dimension of human experience that later theologians like Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) would theorize as accessible by a special intuitive faculty.

The supposed universality of spirituality quickly became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the idea quickly took up residence in non-Western religions. Cosmopolitan representatives of Asian traditions adopted the terminology, and the World's Parliament of Religions galvanized a discourse of inclusive spirituality that became transnational. The concept was an important vehicle by which non-Western traditions presented themselves to the broader world, constituting themselves as "world religions," each with their own "spiritual" dimension. But I want to zero in on one facet of this process: the setting up of a putatively neutral space beyond the confines of particular traditions that all religions have in common or to which they all have access. Use of the term "spiritual" became one of the most prominent ways to designate that space. Given the background of this term then, and the fact that it became pervasive in descriptions of Buddhism at the time, I would like to think about the role it played in the early creation of modernist Buddhisms.

[5] Schmidt 2005.

THE "SPIRITUAL" IN EARLY MODERNIST ARTICULATIONS OF BUDDHISM

We can get a good idea of how this term was deployed in the construction of modernist articulations of Buddhism by surveying some of its occurrences in a few familiar founding figures of Buddhist modernism: Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933), Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), and Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919). Just as those trying to find a stable definition of spirituality today will meet with considerable frustration, we find a multiplicity of uses in the critical period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet we can discern a few distinct patterns.

Anagārika Dharmapāla

In his *The Arya Dharma of Sakya Muni, Gautama, Buddha or "The Ethics of Self Discipline"* (1917), Dharmapāla makes liberal use of the language of spirituality. Its semantic range covers the individual, communal, and cosmic. On the personal level, he refers to the "psychology of spiritual growth."[6] Claiming that Buddhism is "the only religion with a complete psychology,"[7] he equates "psychological contentment" with "spiritual wealth," perhaps implicitly distinguishing it from merit-making activities.[8] Often he discusses spirituality in a communal sense as well. Meditative training and charity, he writes, result in a "total transformation of life through the realization, first in ideas and then in acts, of one's spiritual connection and sympathetic accord with mankind and surrounding nature."[9] The ethical precepts of the Buddha "spiritually established" a "principle of Universal brotherhood,"[10] and Buddhist faith "consists in realizing, through spiritual experience and in moral acts, the continuity of life in man and nature and the fellowship of all beings."[11] The "community of spiritual life," he asserts, is "a negation of the bondage of individual limitations; but it is equally an affirmation of a life broader than the individual."[12] In a number of passages he seems to argue for the democratic nature of this spiritual community. Citing the principles of the Dharma-king in the *sutta*s, he claims that "the Blessed One enunci-

[6] Dharmapāla 1989, p. 25.
[7] Ibid., p. 63.
[8] Ibid., p. 64.
[9] Ibid., p. 135.
[10] Ibid., p. 26.
[11] Ibid., p. 134.
[12] Ibid., p. 134.

ated the principle of democrate [*sic*] spirituality which is higher than the ethics of royal service."[13] India and other ancient cultures too, he claims, had "spiritualized democrac[ies]."[14] Races too are more or less "spiritualized": the "highly spiritualized races of India" he infamously contrasts with the Arabs and "roving Semitic Bedouins."[15] Finally, he extends spirituality to the cosmic: "Only the law of change endures. Countless billions of solar systems exist, the whole universe is spiritually bound by the law of cause and effect."[16]

In most of these statements, Dharmapāla arguably did not need to use these various derivations of the term "spiritual" to get his point across: the Buddha could have simply established, rather than "spiritually established," the principle of Universal brotherhood; one could have democracy, rather than "spiritualized democracy"; and the universe could simply be bound, rather than "spiritually bound by the law of cause and effect." What is it that is "added" by the term "spiritual"? In a first gesture toward an answer, let us note that in all of these uses of the term, he draws, however vaguely, upon explicitly secular discourses of his time: psychology ("psychology of spiritual growth"), modern political theory ("spiritualized democracy"), racial evolutionary theory ("spiritualized races"), and modern cosmology ("billions of solar systems," "cause and effect").

Part of what Dharmapāla appears to be doing is infusing these disciplines into Buddhism as a means of legitimating Buddhism on the world stage by aligning it with the most powerful and ascendant discourses of the time. He rescues Buddhism from the "primitive" by an implicit assertion of spiritual equality in a federation of traditions that have "spiritual" dimensions. Buddhism, like Christianity, has "spiritual" qualities and therefore cannot be relegated to the savage and superstitious, as Christians had often done. So by claiming spirituality for Buddhism, he attempts to grant it transcendent legitimacy.[17]

Yet in addition to infusing these secular discourses into Buddhism, he also appears conversely to be infusing Buddhism into these discourses as a way of "spiritualizing" them. What Buddhism can offer the modern world,

[13] Dharmapāla 1989, p. 36.
[14] Ibid., pp. 84, 104.
[15] Ibid., p. 78.
[16] Ibid., p. 40.
[17] For more on Dharmapāla's attempts to align Buddhism with modern Western discourses of his time, particularly scientific thinking, as a strategy of legitimation, see Lopez 2008 and McMahan 2004.

he implies, is a religion that is at home in the secular, yet has the power to add a dimension of meaning to it—the spiritual—which will rescue it from its nihilistic potentialities. To explore the implications of this, it will help to collect a few more uses of this terminology by other founders of Buddhist modernism.

Henry Steel Olcott

Henry Steel Olcott also makes liberal and suggestive use of the language of spirituality. Like Dharmapāla he proposes a kind of "spiritual development" modeled on evolutionary "progress," an adapting of Darwinian evolutionary theory to the notion of progressive perfection over a series of many lifetimes. Such progress, he says, can be hindered by superstitious practices and misuse of what are commonly called supernatural powers.[18] In typical Orientalist modality, he condemns popular Buddhism, explicitly denouncing "idol worship" and associating "observance of ceremonies and other external practices" with "spiritual blindness and our clinging to mere lifeless forms."[19] "Charms, incantations, the observance of lucky hours and devil-dancing," moreover, are all "positively repugnant" to the fundamental principles of Buddhism.[20] In contrast to such practices, "spiritual science" is a technique of human perfection through cultivation of character and meditation.[21] "Right Meditation leads to spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man."[22] "Men who have merely spiritualised their natures" might in fact be mistaken by the ignorant "for gods"[23] and may have "spiritual powers" (*iddhi*s).[24]

Although his evocation of "spiritual powers" may suggest that his language of spirituality departs from secular discourses, he takes pains to present these powers as "natural." Human beings, he insists, have "latent powers for the production of phenomena commonly called 'miracles' " but these are "natural, not supernatural."[25] Thus no matter how far Olcott may stray from mainstream understandings of the science of his time, he still considers his "occult science" to be science indeed.

[18] Olcott 1915, pp. 81–90.
[19] Ibid., p. 41.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p. 46.
[22] Ibid., p. 94.
[23] Olcott 1919, p. 2.
[24] Olcott 1915, p. 15.
[25] Ibid., p. 85.

Another important theme in Olcott and his fellow Theosophists is that spirituality is universal. Buddhism, he writes, is "a religion of noble tolerance, of universal brotherhood."[26] His fellow Theosophical Society founder, Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) states that Theosophy, or "pure Spiritualism," is "a doctrine which teaches that all which exists is animated or informed by the Universal Soul or Spirit, and that not an atom in our universe can be outside of this omnipresent Principle."[27] According to Theosophist Claude Falls Wright (1867–1923), the aim of the Theosophical Society "is to unite all systems of thought and thus develop a philosophy that will include every phase of existence."[28] Although the use of "spiritual" in Theosophical writings is often imprecise, it is clear that it is meant to denote something universal that all religions participate in, or perhaps point toward, but that transcends their particularity. As the motto of the Theosophical Society stated: "There is no religion higher than Truth."

Like Dharmapāla, Olcott and his fellow Theosophists draw upon psychology, evolutionary theory, and "science" more broadly, even while extending them into the occult realm. Olcott vigorously distances Buddhism and his own interest in "spiritual powers" from "superstitious" popular practices widely condemned by American and European observers of Buddhism on the ground in Sri Lanka. Throughout his work, and especially in *The Buddhist Catechism*, he aligns Buddhist ideas and practices with the emerging global secular discourses of his time.

Shaku Sōen

To get a further idea of the semantic range of spirituality taking shape within Buddhism in this period, let us look at another classic figure in the development of modernist articulations of Buddhism, Shaku Sōen. Sōen also makes liberal use of the term "spiritual" in ways that resonate with our other figures. He adds his own distinctive flavor, however, by adding a more anti-intellectual bent. In discussing "spiritual enlightenment," he claims that what makes religion distinctive is that:

> It is essentially founded on facts of one's own spiritual experience, which is beyond intellectual demonstrability and which opens a finite mind to the light of universal effulgence. . . . By spiritual

[26] Olcott 1915, p. 71.
[27] Blavatsky 1892, p. 307.
[28] Wright 2003, p. 7.

> enlightenment I mean a man's becoming conscious through personal experience of the ultimate nature of his inner being. This insight breaks as it were the wall of intellectual limitation and brings us to a region which has been hitherto concealed from our view. The horizon is now so widened as to enable our spiritual vision to survey the totality of existence. . . . The basis of the religious life is altogether spiritual and not intellectual.[29]

Sōen seems particularly suspicious of the capacities of the intellect to establish truth and posits a more intuitive approach. "Talking and arguing belong to philosophy, and believing in its ordinary sense is a sort of hypothesis, not necessarily supported by facts. Religion, however, wants above everything else solid facts and actual personal experience."[30] Spirituality, then, has its own "solid facts" inaccessible to the intellect. Consciousness, *prajñā*, and enlightenment, moreover, "are all one simultaneous act of the universal reason."[31]

> But to realize its truth one must be spiritually enlightened, must go beyond the narrow limits of intellection, must drink directly from the well of eternal vitality and find out personally how it tastes, bitter or sweet. . . . Let philosophers and theologians say whatever they wish concerning the existence, nature, and activity of God; let them speculate as much as they wish on the theology of the universe and the destiny of mankind and many other abstruse problems of metaphysics; but let you who earnestly aspire to know what this life really means turn away from those wise men and reflect within, or look around yourselves with an open heart which watches and receives, and all the mysteries of the world will be revealed to you in the awakening of your Prajñâ.[32]

Unlike Dharmapāla and Olcott, for Sōen spirituality is more explicitly contrasted with the intellect. He draws on the rhetoric of "scientific Buddhism" in places,[33] but more often sets up the spiritual as a "realm" of experience beyond assertion and denial. This is no doubt an influence of the literature of his own Zen tradition, as well as that of the Romantic, Ideal-

[29] Shaku 1993, pp. 133–34.
[30] Ibid., p. 136.
[31] Ibid., p. 142.
[32] Ibid., pp. 144–45.
[33] Ibid., p. 122.

ist, and Transcendentalist traditions that influenced him and his translator, Suzuki Daisetsu Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (1870–1966; also referred to as D. T. Suzuki).[34] In an interesting juxtaposition of terms, Sōen emphasizes the limitations of speculation, philosophy, theology, and verbal disputation in general, yet insists that spiritual experience establishes "solid facts," inaccessible to "intellection" yet the embodiment of "universal reason." These facts are "supported" not by arguments but by "personal experience." There is, in fact, a hint of anxiety about intellectual discourse, a sense of futility at its inability to arrive at truth. The solution is a kind of "spiritual experience" that transcends the various positions to which the intellect might come, a subverting of the various necessarily limited and relative assertions and denials to which it might arrive in favor of a transcendence that is "more real, more vital, more tangible than mere abstraction, mere knowing, and mere 'proving.'"[35]

All of these themes in these three figures are no doubt familiar to many, and some contributors to this special issue (and myself as well) have addressed them in detail in previous work. We understand, for instance, the politics of nationalism, colonialism, Victorian sensibilities, scientific ideas, and schools of thought from Asia as well as Europe and North America that formed the background of the material I have presented. What is there to add therefore by thinking about the role that this suddenly pervasive term "spiritual" plays?

THE SECULAR AND THE SPIRITUAL

Buddhism and the Disembedding of Belief

One of the obvious problems the term "spiritual" attempts to address beginning in the nineteenth century is that of the conflicting truth claims of various religions, along with claims emerging from secular discourses, particularly the sciences. This issue attained a sense of urgency in the Victorian period, in part, because of the unprecedented global encounter between different peoples. This was not as much of an issue for Europeans prior to the nineteenth century—or at least it was confined to differences between Christian sects, Judaism, and Islam. Other traditions were "pagan" and were not really live options in the West. In the nineteenth century, however, when German Idealists, Romantics, American Transcendentalists, Unitarians, and scholars of

[34] Chapter 5 of McMahan 2008.
[35] Shaku 1993, p. 142.

the emerging field of comparative religion began to develop more favorable assessments of Asian religious and philosophical traditions, the world of potentially conflicting beliefs expanded considerably. Added to this were the striking developments from the sciences at this time, which were revolutionizing the understanding of humanity and its place in the cosmos. There was a crisis of belief among some in the West and challenges to traditional religious authority by science, colonialism, and Western hegemony in Asia.

Let us therefore excavate this situation with regard to belief and conflicting truth claims a little further. This arrival of radical pluralism meant that there were many contradicting beliefs about the same things—the nature of the human being, the origin of the cosmos, the existence of supernatural beings, the origins of species, etc.—all, as it were, placed side-by-side on the same discursive plane. This discursive plane was itself constituted by the arising of particularly modern ways of construing belief. Belief (particularly religious belief) in medieval Europe had the sense of obligations, attitudes, sensibilities, and actions with regard to God and the Church rather than assent to propositional statements. Disbelief (*infidelitas*) had to do with breaking trust, acting disloyally, disrupting the bonds between oneself, God, and society. In the modern era belief became more restricted to a matter of propositional truth, and thus a new dynamic enters in which beliefs, or assertions, are all taken on the same plane of discourse, to be debated and evaluated by the rational autonomous subject.[36] Thus the proposition that God created man from the dust of the earth appears on this plane next to, for example, the proposition that humanity evolved from other species. That these appear as two distinct propositions in contradiction to each other is a function of the particular episteme of the modern era.

It is not, of course, that statements could not contradict each other prior to the modern era. It is rather that the makers of modern secularism (especially in its rationalist iterations) attempted to set up a kind of universal epistemic superstructure in which all propositional statements existed in the same universal discursive space and could be evaluated by similar means. As Asad puts it: "It is not that our present concept of belief (*that* something is true) was absent in pre-modern society but that the words translated as such were usually embedded in distinctive social and political relationships, articulated distinctive sensibilities; they were first of all lived and only secondarily theorized."[37] The Enlightenment conception of truth as a rela-

[36] Asad 2012. See also Taylor 2007 and Toulmin 1990.
[37] Asad 2012, p. 11.

tionship between interior mental representations and exterior facts began to disembed belief from social context in ways peculiar to the modern world. This extension of propositional rationalism into all spheres of life, including religion, disrupted traditional modes of socio-religious life and also enabled new modes of religion to emerge.

Buddhists, therefore, had to respond to the challenges of this discursive field of universal propositional rationalism—and it is within this field that we see the distinctive emergence of the secular, both in the sense of secular disciplines and ways of life, and secularism as a political ideology. This field ostensibly excluded partisan "religious" claims and was therefore putatively neutral (even while it was supported by the very concrete realities of colonial domination and military and economic hegemony).

Buddhists negotiated this field of the secular in particular ways that have had significant and enduring effects on the development of Buddhism in the modern world. One way, natural to Olcott as an American steeped in Western secular modes of knowledge, was to cast Buddhism in the form of this propositional rationality, reconstructing it by disembedding propositional statements from their historical and cultural contexts. Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*, for example, lays out sets of propositional statements to which, in his view, Buddhists should assent. Such a way of presenting Buddhism would likely have been quite foreign to Sinhalese Buddhists before the modern period but it is natural to someone for whom belief was a matter of the autonomous subject choosing to assent to propositional statements that represent reality. These statements that Olcott offers are largely in accord with secular knowledge, except when they extend into the "spiritual." But the spiritual for Olcott is not opposed to secular knowledge but an extension of it. It is "natural, not supernatural" but may not be available to the casual observer or even the conventional scientist. The spiritual then is an augmentation of the regime of propositional rationality into a hidden realm; a realm that is, however, of a piece with the natural world as understood by secular knowledge.

Beyond Propositional Rationalism: Experience

Shaku Sōen, however, takes a different tack, one more suspicious of the epistemic regime of propositional rationality. He deploys the spiritual as a device to address the multiplicity of conflicting propositional truth claims, attempting to subvert this regime, or perhaps, to establish through the concept of spiritual experience another order of "facts" inaccessible to the intellect. In contrast to both Dharmapāla and Olcott, who acceded considerably

to the propositional notion of truth, Sōen sees a fissure between spirituality and the intellect, even while employing its terminology. The "facts of one's own spiritual experience" are "beyond intellectual demonstrability" yet are "supported" by this experience.

What is important here is that of all the other possible aspects of Buddhism that Sōen could emphasize, he invokes this personal-cum-cosmic interiority in his particular historical moment. It is this aspect that is magnetically drawn toward the discourses of interiority already in circulation coming from Romantic, Transcendentalist, and Rationalist traditions emphasizing in different ways the authority of the experience of the autonomous subject. There was certainly interiority and reflexivity in pre-modern forms of Buddhism, but this particular way of construing personal experience, and the authority it is given, seems distinctively modern. In Sōen the meditative self-reflexivity of Zen mingles with the Western notions of the authority of the autonomous subject and the Romantic/Transcendentalist idea of the deep and mysterious interior self. The privatization of religion entailed in secularism in turn provided a context in which meditation and interiority could be revitalized and attain new significance. This private zone of personal experience, Sōen suggests, opens up to the universal and goes beyond the merely personal toward a "spiritual experience" in which "all the mysteries of the world will be revealed to you." Part of what this conception of spiritual experience does here is to suggest, first, that one can know the world as it is through personal intuition and, second, that one does so through surpassing the way the secular disciplines, rooted in propositional rationalism, come to knowledge, that is, scientific observation and rational debate.

Experience and Experiment

At this point we may be in a position to make some suggestions about the meaning and function of the emerging conception of universal spirituality rooted in personal experience that is taking shape in this period. For our authors the spiritual is an attempt to at once embrace and transcend the secular. Moreover, transtraditional spirituality parallels the secular structurally, draws from it rhetorically, and is constituted by it historically. The secular ostensibly sets up a space of open inquiry, observation, and discussion free of religious dogma and authority (even while it is still influenced by largely Christian-derived assumptions and tacit orientations). Scientific investigation is the paramount form of secular discourse. Reliant on empirical obser-

vation and rational evaluation, the sine qua non of scientific research is that it is public and verifiable. With the establishment of the secular, religion is reconstituted as a matter of private belief and is given secondary status as a way of knowing and understanding the world.

The new understanding of spirituality emerged out of the tension between these two domains, attempting to save what was considered valuable in religion, yet modeling itself on the secular disciplines, with their emphasis on observation and universality. If the quintessential method of the secular sciences was the *experiment*, the parallel concept in the spiritual was *experience*. The first was testable, leading to knowledge that could be observed and proven to all regardless of culture—that is to say, it aspired to universality. The second was private, belonging to the newly constituted private realm of religion. Yet, bolstered by the various discourses of the autonomous subject, which in turn entwine with the meditative disciplines of Buddhism, *experience* becomes the "spiritual" counterpart to the *experiment*, and like the experiment also aspires to universal, verifiable knowledge—its own "facts." Like the experiment, spiritual experience was conceived as a way of directly investigating reality in a manner that transcended doctrine and authority. It belonged to no church, was beholden to no authority, tradition, or institution, and was committed to free-form discovery of truth. The spiritual, therefore, emerged as the mirror-image of the newly constituted space of secularity. If the secular was a public space of free inquiry, the spiritual was a private space of free contemplative exploration.[38]

This new construal of the internal spiritual experience provided the conditions under which the discourse of "Buddhism and science" could emerge. If experience was the personal spiritual equivalent to the experiment, we can see how the notion of Buddhism as a "science of mind" or "internal science" follows. Meditation, introspection, interiority, religious experience became the "spiritual" counterpart of public science. The former studied the interior world while the latter studied the exterior world. Indeed this formulation gets repeated in numerous publications throughout the twentieth century and up to the present. According to Lama Govinda, for example, "the only

[38] This use of "experience" was another episode in the history of transformation of the term. Peter Dear traces the differentiation of "experiment" from "experience," claiming that the former, prior to the seventeenth century, carried some of the meanings that we associate with "experiment" today (Dear 1995). Clearly relevant here as well is Robert Sharf's argument on the rhetorical role of "experience" in Buddhist modernism, as well as critics of the argument (Sharf 1995, Gyatso 1999, Hori 2003).

difference between those two fields of experience [science and mysticism] is that the truth of science—being directed toward external objects—is 'objectively' provable or, better, demonstrable, whereas mysticism, being directed toward the subject, rests on 'subjective' experience."[39] Both, according to this notion, establish generic truths irrespective of sectarian, cultural, or ethnic identities. Although they may seem science's opposite, these universalist articulations of mysticism and spirituality—standard from the nineteenth century until the present—stem from the same desire as the sciences to establish universal truth by direct encounter, thereby establishing a language of truth that transcends the plural and parochial truth-claims of the religions. Thus popular writers today, and even some scholars, often describe Buddhist meditation not as a religious activity but as a scientific method of investigating the mind and the laws of nature from within.[40]

The new concept of spirituality also entailed an attempt to establish legitimacy for this interior domain when religion in its communal, ritual, and social functions was increasingly under attack. Within the broad framework of secularism, the spiritual served as a protected zone of experience unassailable by science and other secular discourses. Yet spirituality thus conceived was made possible by the secular itself and indeed was modeled on the secular.

If secularism was an attempt to establish separate spheres of public rational debate and scientific truth on the one hand and private religious belief and practice on the other, transtraditional spirituality mirrored this split, bifurcating religion into a zone of communal religious life (institutions, rituals, creeds, dogmas, festivals, magic, etc.) and a private zone of experience. But notice that the roles of the terms are reversed. Though the spiritual takes shape in this private space, it serves a mediating function that mirrors that of the public secular. If secularism purports to establish an unbiased discursive sphere of public knowledge while relegating "religion" to the private, thus providing a way of transcending religious difference, the transtraditional spiritual purports to be a generic *transcendent* sphere that overcomes the various conflicting religious claims. It is rooted in the personal and private but, like secular knowledge, implicitly claims to transcend the parochial, cultural, and national. The concept of universal, transcultural spirituality, therefore, was a mirror of the regime of propositional rationality. Both aspired to universal, transcultural truth that could adjudicate

[39] Govinda 1989, p. 51.
[40] Wallace 2007, Hayward 1999.

between all possible positions. Universal spirituality emerges as a response to this universal rationality of the secular, but a response that takes its essential form from the secular. The spiritual was something to be ascertained by the autonomous individual, free of the restraints of tradition and culture. It offered, as it were, an alternative secular: the enchanted secular.

THE ENCHANTED SECULAR

With this, we can return to the question of what is "added" when our authors use the term spiritual, for example, when Dharmapāla writes about "spiritual psychology" or characterizes the universe as "spiritually bound by the law of cause and effect."[41] One effect of the term is to enchant the secular disciplines that early Buddhist modernists used in staking their claims. We have seen that Buddhist modernists often attempted to revitalize their tradition by aligning it with the secular. Yet one of the "disadvantages" of the secular was its disenchanting potential—its capacity to strip meaning from the universe and render it lifeless and mechanical. One niche that early Buddhist modernists attempted to fill was to provide a way of thinking about the human and the cosmic that embraced the secular, naturalistic worldview, yet infused a new kind of enchantment into it. This enchantment was not a return to gods, spirits, heavens, and hells, but rather an attempt at "secular" enchantment, i.e., the spiritual.

This is not to say that we should embrace *in toto* the disenchantment narrative of theories of secularization. In fact, ours is an example of how disenchantment of the world is not the uniform process that Weber believed, that is, an inexorable linear transformation from the world of magic, demons, and gods to the "iron cage" of modernity. Rather, the case of Buddhist modernism suggests a differentiated process of shifting enchantment from the external world to cultivation of interior states and a re-imaging of the cosmos (not, for instance, a cold, purposeless expanse of space and lifeless matter but an infinite, interdependent web of life, again, "spiritually bound by the law of cause and effect"). The process, moreover, is differentiated in the sense that it did not apply to all of society uniformly; elites, of course, experienced it most, and it filtered into various other strata of society, again, differentially. Further, disenchantment and secularization have not occurred uniformly in various Buddhist societies but have been dependent upon particular social and political conditions. Secularism, as it infused Sri Lankan society throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries under colonialism,

[41] Dharmapāla 1917, p. 40.

was different than the secularism that has impacted Chinese Buddhism under Communism. Yet one of the fundamental dynamics of how Buddhists have attempted to modernize their tradition is through the pattern of attempting to reenchant the disenchanted world, not through a rejection of disenchantment per se but through embracing the agents of disenchantment and reframing them in such a way as to reinfuse sacrality into the world.

The Promise and Weakness of Universalism

Secularism began as an attempt to adjudicate religious wars between Christians. It entailed privatizing religious belief and instituting a public sphere of rational debate, empirical observation, and experiment to arrive at democratic consensus and scientific truth. Its epistemology, which I have here called propositional rationalism, promised a universal language of truth with solid epistemic foundations that would mediate between contending factions.[42] The concept of the transtraditional spiritual also promised a generic, non-partisan understanding of truth that transcended differences and offered a superstructure that was not bound to any tradition, but in which all religions could participate. Secularism and spirituality thus had similar mediating and redemptive promises—and similar weaknesses. Indeed the inability of spirituality to provide a framework for real-world reconciliation between different religions, as well as different kinds of Buddhism during this period is well documented. Even with their efforts to establish a "world Buddhism," Dharmapāla, Olcott, Sōen and others were still quite wedded to their particular visions of the Dharma. Dharmapāla broke from Olcott, in part, over the latter's Theosophical vision of universality in which all religions were different facets of the same truth. After a long relationship with the Theosophical Society, Dharmapāla finally asserted that Theosophy was "only consolidating Krishna worship."[43] He ultimately could not tolerate relegating his own tradition to anything other than the most developed and advanced articulation of spirituality. His vision of spiritual community was inseparable from his nationalism and an increasingly triumphalistic vision of Buddhism.[44] "To say that all religions have a common foundation only shows the ignorance of the speaker. . . . Dharma alone is supreme to the Buddhist."[45] Moreover, while in some writings what he seems to mean

[42] Toulmin 1990.
[43] Quoted in Prothero 1995, p. 167.
[44] Prothero 1995.
[45] Ibid., p. 172.

by "spiritual democracy" was the nineteenth-century ideal of the brotherhood of man, his increasing hostility toward other religions and anti-Semitic rhetoric of Aryan "spiritualized races" undermined the universalism he had earlier preached.

Similarly, Sōen's internationalization of Buddhism, especially at the World's Parliament of Religions, was inseparable from Japan's nationalist ambitions.[46] Aside from the philosophical problems inherent in the notion, the entanglement of the rhetoric of universal spirituality with Dharmapāla's and Sōen's nationalism suggests the failure of transtraditional spirituality, at least as represented by these individuals, to live up to its promise of transcending cultural and religious difference. Here, perhaps, is where the work of the concept of the spiritual can become self-contradictory, exposing the fact that people who use this appeal to the transcendent still likely tie it to particular interests—personal, national, and even racial. It was deployed to adjudicate and reconcile, to absorb all systems into a harmonious metaphysic, and it was modeled on a secularism that made similar efforts. Even when the terminology of the spiritual was affixed to Buddhist and secular concepts, however, the interpreter still had to construe just exactly where the line was between religion and spirituality, whose version of Buddhism was more spiritual, and whether Buddhism might have a more secure claim on the spiritual than another religious tradition. Once the putatively generic realm of universal spirituality is posited, it then becomes itself a space of contestation. Like secularism itself, with its universalizing epistemology that promised to ground facts in ultimate foundations, transtraditional spirituality could not shake off tradition so easily nor escape its situatedness in history and culture.

And Yet . . .

Yet in another sense, when looking at the history of this concept and its associated practices, we could consider the attempts at transmutation of Buddhism into a universal spirituality a great success. While the secular has not proliferated globally and uniformly, as twentieth-century sociology predicted it would, the dominance and prestige of secular disciplines and orientations—psychology, evolutionary science, democracy, modern cosmology, etc.—are indisputable throughout much of the world. Reconfiguring Buddhism as a spirituality tuned to the key of the secular created a particular space for it among an emerging transnational educated elite with the ability

[46] Snodgrass 2003.

to introduce it into the global mediascape. It is among this population that the new Buddhism of enchanted secularity has grown for over a century and continues to thrive today. Some of the most globally successful forms of Buddhism today are, in fact, forms that veer decidedly toward the secular: Engaged Buddhism and Buddhist Humanism, for example, as well as the Vipassanā movement and other quasi-secular meditation movements. One of the most internationally successful Buddhist movements, Soka Gakkai, as well as many secularized versions of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism now all over the globe, are all descendents of this early re-creation of Buddhism as a "spirituality" that can be practiced even by adherents of other religions or the non-religious. Representing Buddhism as the spiritual—the enchanted secular—was, therefore, more than just a matter of representation. It was part of the creation of new forms of this-worldly Buddhist thought and practice that have proven to be durable and influential.

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